

System Dynamics Society
Report to Policy Council: Activities Relating to Commercial Practice
July, 2016

Ken Cooper with Sharon Els and David Andersen

***Summary:** A number of activities relating to the commercial practice of System Dynamics are under way and projected for the future. Our committee has worked out many of the logistics and organizational arrangements for establishing a Forrester Internship program. This program intends to place our best students in system dynamics into firms doing high quality commercial work. We have developed some structures and procedures to support this program and have identified a pilot class of two students as Forrester Interns. We are evaluating this pilot program and expect to admit another 3-5 interns beginning in the fall of 2016. In addition, we are planning to (1) repeat and update the survey of commercial practice, (2) begin a program to videotape senior practitioners of system dynamics as they discuss the "back story" of important commercial projects in the past (to be connected to online success stories), and (3) perhaps consider establishing an award for innovative application of system dynamics in promising new domains.*

This report briefly describes activities undertaken during the past year and discusses projected activities in the future. Ken Cooper will not be able to be present at the Policy Council meeting in Delft. David Andersen will be available to answer questions about this report.

Successful Launch of First Pilot Class of Forrester Interns. The Forrester Internship program intends to place some of the best students of system dynamics into firms doing high quality commercial work. The program's purpose is to put in place a structure that can support high quality mentoring and career development aimed at commercial practice of system dynamics. Our committee has worked through many of the logistics of setting up and running such a program and we have placed our first two students in a pilot program. We expect that each intern will complete an individualized program with four components: (1) Work on a commercial project that is not on the critical path of the hosting organization. (2) Work on a second project tailored to the academic program of the student's home institution, (3) Work with the commercial firm to document in writing one or two commercial success stories, and (4) Systematically reflect on these experiences both for personal learning, but also to help improve the program.

Add 3-5 New Interns by the Fall, 2016 Semester. We are in the process of evaluating the results of this pilot program and hope to expand the program by admitting up to 3-5 new internships during the fall semester. To accomplish this goal, we will need to recruit high quality applicants as well as add to our pool of available commercial sites. In order to provide the best quality mentoring experiences, we are seeking placements where five or more professionals are working within a given host organization.

Repeat the Survey of Commercial Practice. Several years ago, Ken Cooper conducted a survey of the state of commercial practice of system dynamics. A copy of that survey is attached to this report. We are seeking an academic partner (a faculty member in a business school working with a PhD student?) to

replicate this survey and to produce a (publishable?) paper documenting recent trends in commercial practice. Do you know of a team seeking to partner on this project?

Videotape Senior Practitioner's "Back Stories" of Key Successful Projects. As part of on-going efforts to document best commercial practice of system dynamics, we intend to launch a pilot project that will videotape senior practitioners' stories of how these projects came into existence or interesting anecdotes of how a particular project developed. This short video clips will be uploaded online, perhaps associated with published descriptions of the final projects, to provide future students and clients with a more complete view of how best-practice commercial projects have developed in the past. We continue to solicit ideas and support for this project.